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RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 HARARE 000606

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

AF/S FOR S. HILL
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR E. LOKEN AND L. DOBBINS
STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [ZI](#)
SUBJECT: VIOLENCE INCREASINGLY FOCUSED ON MDC TARGETS;
POPULACE REMAINS INTIMIDATED

REF: HARARE 598

Summary

¶1. (SBU) While violence appears to have subsided since the June 27 election, particularly in Harare and Matabeleland, there are pockets of violence throughout the rest of the country, supported by the continuing presence of ZANU-PF bases used for torture, beatings, and reeducation. In addition to these pockets, post-election violence has been targeted at individuals, particularly MDC officials and their families. The result of this is an intimidated populace and an exacerbated humanitarian problem as many IDPs are afraid to return home. End Summary.

Assessment of Violence Difficult

¶2. (SBU) Assessing whether or not violence has decreased since the June 27 Presidential election is a tricky task in the current environment of repression and intimidation. With the MDC's grassroots and leadership framework fractured through the murder, hospitalization, hiding and displacement of MPs, Senators, Councilors and party organizers, along with activists and journalists, the ability of opposition and civil society to compile and disseminate real-time information regarding rural violence has been impeded. Without the usual reporting networks, it is difficult to definitively say if violence has truly declined in some areas or just altered its form.

A look at numbers and incidents

¶3. (SBU) An analysis of NGO reporting of politically-motivated deaths, injuries, and intimidation

indicates that the prevalence of incidents involving large numbers of victims has fallen. Before the June 27 runoff, entire communities in many areas of Zimbabwe were forced to attend ZANU-PF rallies. At many of these rallies people were beaten, tortured, and even killed. In addition, "re-education camps" were used to hold dozens of MDC activists who were tortured and indoctrinated. There are far fewer reports of this kind of mass activity since June 27. However, incidents of violence have not stopped. The most recent detailed data of incidents runs through July 1, the weekend of the election. Comparing election weekend data (Friday-Sunday) with the weekend before reveals that there were 18 incidents requiring medical attention confirmed on election weekend, versus 25 over the previous weekend. Also, the reports from election weekend are almost exclusively limited to the Harare area, likely because of reporting and travel constraints rather than an absence of incidents in rural areas. The targets of the election-weekend violence were almost exclusively those holding positions in the MDC rather than just perceived MDC supporters, who were also a prime target of the pre-June 27 violence. Because of reporting difficulties, it is almost impossible to conduct an accurate comparative analysis of violence before and after the June 27 election at this early date.

¶4. (SBU) That said, post-election reports indicate that violence has subsided considerably in Harare and ZANU-PF bases used for beatings, torture, and reeducation have been dismantled. Bulawayo and the two Matabeleland provinces experienced relatively little pre-election violence and

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remain mostly calm; there has been some sporadic violence. Anecdotal reports from rural areas in the rest of the country indicate pockets of violence and the continued presence of ZANU-PF bases. In Midlands province, there are reports of six murders on July 3, where relatives have reportedly been denied access to bodies in the mortuary. In Gokwe, Midlands province, on July 6, ZANU-PF youths and war veterans reportedly attacked homeless MDC supporters who had gathered together. There are reports of at least one death in the incident, and many of the survivors fled into the forest. Police impounded an ambulance that was en route to the scene to help the victims. In Nyanga in Manicaland province on June 30, 34 people who had sought refuge at the local MDC chairperson's farm were taken to the police station while police "looked for arms" at the farm. In Masvingo province on the same day, villagers were beaten by ZANU-PF youths and war veterans who were looking for the six people who had voted for MDC at the local polling station. We have also received reports of violence directed against groups of MDC supporters in the Mashonaland East communities of Mudzi and Mutoko.

Intimidation having the intended effect

¶5. (SBU) If the large-scale pre-election violence has subsided, targeted violence and intimidation continues, much of it directed against MDC officials and their families. Fleeing death threats or trumped up charges, several MDC MP candidates remain on the run, even with parliament scheduled to convene next week. A Manicaland MP was abducted at gunpoint on June 30 outside of the High Court where he had gone for a hearing on an electoral challenge by the losing candidate in the March 29 election. His whereabouts are still unknown. One particularly violent murder was widely publicized on Zimbabwean blogs on July 7. MDC driver for Mashonaland West, Joshua Bakacheza, was abducted on June 25 in Harare along with another activist. The two were tortured and questioned about their MDC activities, shot, and left for dead. Bakacheza was shot three times and died, while the other activist was shot once and survived. He dragged himself to a nearby road and a good Samaritan drove him back to town where he remained in a coma for one week. He was

then able to direct colleagues to Bakacheza's badly decomposing, tortured body that remained in a field. Photos of his body have been widely publicized online. While this is just one of over one hundred murdered MDC activists and supporters, the images have the intended effect of instilling fear and intimidation in those who would dare to work for change.

16. (SBU) In some areas, such as the Harare high-density suburbs of Chitungwiza and Hatcliff, police have arrested some of the ZANU-PF youth who perpetrated the violence leading up to the June 27 runoff. However, perpetrators generally remain free and have not faced any legal consequences. This is one of the main reasons, in addition to the loss of their homes and livelihoods, that thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Harare refuse to go home. They know who beat them or burned their homes down, and they are terrified of facing them again in person. Furthermore, the recent militia attack on the government-sponsored IDP camp (reftel), only served to confirm their fear and mistrust of government actors.

COMMENT

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17. (SBU) In light of the ongoing political negotiations, it is uncertain if the apparent lull in generalized violence will continue or if, as some media outlets have suggested, ZANU-PF will unleash its full force again on the general population. The violence and intimidation directed against major and minor actors in the MDC and civil society continues to cripple their ability to organize or resist, and continues to have a chilling effect on the mood in Zimbabwe. It also impedes a resolution to the humanitarian crisis, as IDPs remain afraid to return home. While we continue to monitor the levels and types of violence across Zimbabwe, we remain conscious that even if some categories of violence subside, the intimidation factor remains utterly pervasive. END
COMMENT.
Dhanani